

The Alchemical Process

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INTRODUCTION

In that portion of the Great Work which has to do with the transformation of the alchemist himself, the making of the Philosopher's Stone is a process whereby the vibratory activity of the interior stars (chakras) is so modified that their lower rates of vibration are transmuted and sublimated, or lifted up. This transmutation of the subtle force which works through the interior stars has a triple consequence:

1. It leads to spiritual illumination,
2. It gives the perfected adept a new body which is absolutely healthy;
3. It enables him to express powers which remain latent in most human beings.

His health is the result of perfect combination and coordination of chemical and electrical energies which maintain the form and functions of his physical body. This condition of radiant vitality is communicable. When it is established, an alchemist can project his own rate of vibration upon the bodies of other persons, inducing a vibration like that of his own organs. This is one method of Hermetic healing.

His mental and spiritual vibration is also communicable. By projecting his own state of consciousness on the mind of another, he can raise the level of that person's consciousness so that it approximates his own.

He can alter the appearance of things around him, and even change their atomic structure by raising or lowering their rates of vibration. It is by such control that he performs the secondary operation which enables him to make an actual physical substance which may be employed even by persons who are not themselves adepts, to transmute metals, and to heal diseases.

THE PROCESS

The outcome of the alchemical process gives the alchemist a consciousness of the One-ness of All, from which there follows a development of that genuine love of his fellows which is rooted in his perception of the fact of human brotherhood. At the same time, the alchemical process requires analysis, or separation, and this analysis, or separation, is an act of the mind. It is the work of alchemical Mercury, an indispensable preliminary to

the synthesis which makes possible the manifestation of the New Man, of whom it is said, "He shall come."

In our physical and mental analysis we discover, sooner or later, that the power in nature which is astrologically attributed to the sign Scorpio is what "...ascends from earth to heaven and descends again to earth and receives the strength of the superiors and of the inferiors."

The making of the New Man is the real alchemical process, and it begins with the right use of physical materials: food, air, water, and light. The Great Work itself requires certain physical material. Food: No book tells just what these materials are; no book can. Not only because the foodstuffs are such commonplace ones that nobody would believe them to be the true materials, but also because for every operator the formula varies. This variation depends basically on his physical condition at the time of beginning the work. It is also determined by his chemical type, and by his particular constitution. This is shown in various ways; among others, by the planetary positions and aspects of his natal chart.

What an alchemist has first of all to do is to establish a certain chemical balance in his physical body. This involves the supply of due proportions of 12 chemicals:

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|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Flouride of lime | |
| 2. Phosphate of magnesia | |
| 3. Sulphur of potash | |
| 4. Phosphate of soda | |
| 5. Sulphate of lime | |
| 6. Silica | |
| 7. Phosphate of lime | |
| 8. Sodium Chloride | |
| 9. Phosphate of iron | |
| 10. | Phosphate of potash |
| 11. | Sulphate of soda |
| 12. | Chloride of potash |

None of these materials are properly adapted to the uses of the physical body in their inorganic forms, but if they are taken into the system as organic compounds, in food, they are the precise materials required for performance of the Great Work. Most of the foods rich in them are found in the vegetable kingdom.

The discovery of the First Matter follows a change in the alchemist's body, and it is with this change that the first stages of the alchemical process have to do. The organic changes are brought about by psychological means.

CALCINATION □

Calcination is defined as the expulsion of the volatile substance from a matter by the action of heat.

In the work of alchemy, then, the first stage employs the force a yogi would call Tejas or Agni, the element of fire; and it makes particular use of the currents of energy which originate in the Mars center, just below the navel, and in the Sun center, above and behind the heart.

Psychologically, the process of calcination is what drives out from consciousness (the Matter) the volatile or changeable elements of erratic emotion, personal bias, erroneous opinion, and so on. Purity of mind and body are brought about by the work of calcination because alchemical calcination is a purgation of the subconscious resulting in a new consciousness, which is like quicklime in its effect on all forms of error.

Ripley tells us to take gold and silver only, meaning thereby the solar current which controls the heart and the lunar current which predominates in all glandular functions. The calcination of these two currents is a gradual purgation which, Ripley says, takes a year or more. Here he speaks without the slightest concealment. It does take just about a full year, if one is diligent, to purge subconsciousness of its inherited and acquired false knowledge.

CONGELATION □

The act of changing from a fluid to a solid by cooling or coagulation is called congelation.

The second stage of the alchemical process employs what a yogi would call Pritheiri, the element of earth, and in this stage the alchemist has to do with currents of energy which originate in the throat center (□) and in the pituitary body (□). After the substance has been purified by the fiery process of calcination, and by the exercise of the Constituting Intelligence, (assigned to Aries) the next stage of the work consists in the formation or growth of a new series of images.

The union with the Universal Knower is alchemical congelation. It is affected by the functions of three centers in the body. These are: (1) The auditory center in the brain, (2) The Moon center, the pituitary body; and (3) The Venus center in the throat. The combined activity results in a special function of the auditory center.

Imagination is the power which determines this part of the work. One must use it in every conceivable way ingenuity can suggest in order to make more vivid one's awareness that the Eternal Presence is the actual substance of every form we perceive. This use of imagination, related to Venus, effects a gradual change in our emotional reactions to all experience, and this change modifies the function of the Venus center in the throat. As a result of this change in emotional reaction, a change in the operation of the glands connected with the throat center is affected. Thus eventually there is a change in the chemistry of the alchemist's blood.

Success in alchemy is not for those who are in a hurry.

FIXATION □

Fixation is the establishment of the due bounds of the three principles (□ - Superconsciousness, □ - Self-consciousness; □ - Subconsciousness). It is the establishment in the alchemist's mind of a firm, immovable awareness of the true relations and functions of these three.

Concentration is essential to fixation. In active concentration, one's breathing becomes slower and more rhythmical. Furthermore, the practice of slow, rhythmical breathing makes concentration easier. Breath control and mind control go together.

SEPARATION □

Separation is the formulation of the end, or objective, toward which the special work of the particular alchemist is directed. It is the utterance of the alchemist's own Magical Word.

In the main, the universal magical speech is the language of pictorial symbolism. But besides the symbolism, of which subconsciousness is the storehouse, there is a true language heard by those who have opened their inner hearing. This inner language is the true native tongue of every human being, and many advanced initiates have become proficient in it. It is in this language only that the spoken word has truly miraculous power, although there are ways of adapting the secret language to the tongues of men so that certain phrases and words in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and even in English, have what a yogi would call mantric power. Every word, in every language, has its own specific rate of vibration, and its own specific geometrical form.

DIGESTION □

Digestion is the exposure of a substance to the action of a liquid with the aid of heat.

The water is the cosmic mental energy, called water because it flows in streams, has currents, vibrates like water, has tides, and is like a mirror or reflector.

Alchemical fire is the electrical vital force which takes form as solar radiance and heat, the animating principle of all creatures. It is called fire because its action breaks down and consumes the forms through which it becomes manifest.

The Union of the Sun and Mars is just what happens at this stage of the alchemical work. The outcome of the process pictured by Tarot Key #8, Strength, is the blending in the human body of forces which come from the Mars center and the Sun center respectively. The Sun, or heart center, is the point at which the undifferentiated cosmic radiance enters the field of human personality. The Mars center, just below the navel, is the most active of the lower centers of the serpent power. When the currents of these two centers are combined and directed by the Alchemical Woman, as shown in Key 8, the result is the release of certain subtle substances into the blood stream. These provide the energy required for subsequent stages of the work.

DISTILLATION ¶

Distillation is the process of separating volatile from less volatile compounds.

Alchemical distillation is a physiological process which occurs in the Virgo section of the body. Assimilation could be called the basis of alchemical distillation.

The separation of the subtle essences from chyle, in the region governed by Virgo, is what is meant by alchemical distillation.

The chyle itself is relatively gross. The essences extracted from it are volatile, moving rapidly from one part of the body to another. The most important of these subtle essences have not been identified by physical science, but they have been known for centuries by yogis and alchemists.

The process of assimilation is under the rule of the conscious mind. Primarily, this rule is exerted in the selection of what we eat and drink, and in the conscious control of breathing. For mark this well: It is the breath which makes assimilation complete.

Eat moderately. Eat what you like, and what agrees with you. Find this out by experiment, by reading sound, scientific explanations of the various food values. Eat foods rich in vitamins, especially those rich in vitamin D.

SUBLIMATION ¶

The strict definition of sublimation is the conversion of a solid by heat into vapor which, on cooling, becomes solid again without assuming a liquid form. In modern psychology, the same term is used to denote diversion of undesirable natural trends or impulses, by education or conscious effort, into some more desirable type of behavior or activity. It is with this latter definition that we are concerned.

Breath control is essential to the work of sublimation. This breath control must not be confused with any of the dangerous practices which have been widely advocated. It is simply balanced, rhythmic breathing: a full, deep breath followed by a period of retention, and then, a slow, complete exhalation. Count four for inhalation, four for retention, and four for exhalation, when you begin this practice. After a while you may increase the count gradually, until you can make it ten, at the same tempo, for each part of a complete breath cycle. Go slow, and be sure not to subject yourself to strain. Watch the breathing as you do this practice to see that it is easy, regular, and noiseless. Do not practice over ten minutes at a time, and not more than three times daily. The best times are on rising, at noon, and at sunset.

We should eliminate whatever wastes power. Hence, we cut out useless discussion of our hopes and aims with persons who are not actually interested. We avoid arguments and controversial topics, because we know argument never settles any controversy. We avoid whatever diverts us from the path leading to our goal.

Sublimation actually converts solids in the bloodstream into a vapor through the functioning of the brain cells involved in the work. Then the vapor condenses itself again as a solid -- as the solid conditions of external circumstances. One of the functions of the human brain is to form matrices for external conditions. The matrices are mental images. The energy expressed in creative imagination is real energy, derived from subtle, but relatively solid, substances in the blood stream. That energy is projected when we think creatively, and ultimately it condenses, and it is precipitated or solidified into actual physical forms which correspond to the mental images.

PUTREFACTION ¶

Putrefaction is the disintegration of a body into its elementary parts. What is indicated here is the disintegration of that which is the real matter of the alchemical operations: the alchemist's own personality.

This work of putrefaction, connected with the Imaginative Intelligence, pictured in the 13th Key of Tarot (Death), is the nerve-force which is specialized in the Mars center below the navel. Mastery of the currents of this force is gained by mental imagery; but the images have nothing to do with the sex functions. All magic is accomplished by the mind's power of generating images.

The active principle in putrefaction is the Saturn force, corresponding to ♄. The Mars force cannot be lifted up unless it be stirred into activity by an impulse originating in the Saturn center at the base of the spine. When the coiled-up Kundalini is released by right concentration and meditation, it rises upward and in its ascent impels the Mars force upward also. Mars cannot become active unless stirred into action by Saturn.

INCINERATION ♄

Incineration follows putrefaction. Putrefaction is the denial of the false origination of personal activity. Incineration affirms the true origination of everything which is accomplished through the agency of personality.

The influence dominant in the work of incineration exerts itself through the Jupiter center in man's body. This center is the solar plexus. It is the great subconscious reservoir of impressions and the process of incineration clears the reservoir of all the refuse of our former erroneous interpretation of experience.

Incineration, therefore, is the purging and refinement of the desire nature, which when it is thoroughly cleansed and purified, having passed through the deaths of its old forms, becomes the Great Medicine. But it must come by Grace.

This stage refers to the reduction of the sense of separate personality to absolute nothingness or blackness. Following this, incineration first substitutes for the sense of personal origination of thought and action the idea that whatever goes on in the field of personal expression is really the reflection of the One Reality. This is the white stage of the work, or alchemical silver. It is followed by the red stage, in which the various events in the field of personal experience are found to be not only reflections of the One Identity, but also direct operations of that One Identity Itself.

FERMENTATION □

You now take the leaven (up to this stage, you have been preparing it) and mix it with the seemingly chaotic lawless mass of sense experience symbolized by the Devil, Key 15 of Tarot.

When the leaven of superconsciousness has been received, through the suspension of personal identification with events and actions which occur through, rather than by, the personal vehicle, this leaven begins to operate subconsciously.

In fermentation, the Saturn center energy is combined with the force of the Mars center. In this stage the animal nature is intensified, and at no other point in the alchemical operation is it so evident that the lower elements of personality are of like nature with the beasts.

DISSOLUTION □

Dissolution is the process whereby two or more substances are combined to form a single homogeneous mixture, usually a liquid, sometimes a solid.

Alchemical solution is the cause of alchemical congelation, since it is the process which reduces all solid bodies in man's experience into their elemental "water." This process is that of meditation, which enables one who is proficient in it to change his consciousness of any solid into direct metaphysical awareness of that solid's essential spiritual substance, the alchemical water or First Matter.

If the mental matrix be kept intact; that is, if the mental image remains unbroken, the invisible fluidic substance can be 'cooled' until it becomes an actual physical object in the personal environment of the alchemist.

Success in meditation actually establishes a current of subtle energy which flows between the Sun and Mercury centers (heart and pineal).

MULTIPLICATION □

Multiplication is the act or process of increasing in number or quantity. The augmenting of the elixir.

Multiplication, in brief, is the tingeing of the whole body with the consciousness which is first experienced when the Stone is actually made within the pineal gland. Hence, it is associated with the Corporeal Intelligence.

During sleep, subconsciousness repairs and eliminates the waste of the body; and it is during sleep that multiplication, in alchemy, occurs.

In the process of alchemical multiplication, the Corporeal Intelligence tinges every one of the thirty trillion cells of the physical body with the illuminated consciousness of the adept. The result is a subtle change in the physical vehicle and in the alchemist's finer bodies. The principle changes are in the blood stream, and recent developments in biology make it seem probable that these changes have to do with the functions of the ductless glands which are connected with the great nerve centers.

The transformed vehicle of an adept can interrupt and transform rates of the Life-power's electromagnetic vibration which have no effect on the body of an ordinary human being. An adept in alchemy can utilize directly, with no other instrument than his own body, currents of the universal energy whereby every form in his physical environment may be changed if there be any good reason for effecting such a transformation. Such an Adept truly possesses the Universal Medicine, and he can heal all diseases and even raise the dead.

Projection is sometimes listed as a stage of the work; but this is incorrect because projection is impossible until the great work is accomplished.

Even more wonderful (than physical projection of base metals into gold) is the metaphysical aspect of projection. This is, first of all, the ability to change human personality, not only physically, but also mentally and morally. The physical transmutation may range all the way from merely establishing normal function in a diseased body to the entire regeneration of the personality, so that all the stages of the Great Work may be rapidly accomplished by a person who has the good fortune to be in contact with a true Master.

In fact, there are many persons who are more or less unconscious vehicles for some alchemist's mental projection.

Consider this well, for it is very much to the point. Too much emphasis is laid by some on exact and restricted definition and procedure. Keep in mind the fundamental principle: The sages never lie, for a sage cannot; but they are never so much to be suspected as when they seem to speak most openly.

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION IN ALCHEMY

Below are listed points of practical importance when pursuing the Operation of the Stone. Each initiate should keep these in mind.

1. Intellectual recognition of this superpersonal of the Life-Power's activity is a sine qua non for success in alchemy. One must use one's brains to be an alchemist. Lazy acceptance of creed and traditions does not lead to the necessary mental grasp. Nor will lukewarm affirmations of the reality of the Superconscious Life suffice. The mind of the alchemist must be renewed. It must take fresh hold on the idea of a Higher Power.
2. Preparation is first a moral or ethical preparation. Evil tendencies are to be overcome, and positive virtues developed. The gross functions of the body are to be purified. Then comes the finer purification of interior centers.
3. The first care of the alchemist must be to call into his field of personality the influx of power from above. He must mentally reach upward toward that power. He must make himself keenly aware that it is really at hand, really operative in every detail of his personal existence. This keen awareness does not come all at once. It takes practice.
4. Remind yourself frequently that every one of your mental states is a transformation of superpersonal, superconscious energy. Tell yourself many times a day that your words are made possible by the same power, and watch your speech to see that it gives adequate expression to so exalted a source. Look to the actions of your body in the same way. By such practices, repeated until they become second nature, you will begin to effect the necessary renewal of your mind.
5. Put a curb on the human tongue. Be cheerful and sociable.
6. You can't become an alchemist by rote. You must live by principle, free from slavery to convention. Great Adepts are always great gentlemen. Consistent surrender to the Higher Life assures this.
7. To make the Philosophers' Stone is: (1) To establish a fixed, stable awareness of the Central Ego; (2) To share in that Ego's permanent knowledge of the true nature of what goes on in the field of sensation, particularly of what goes on in the "Kingdom of Stone," or the mineral kingdom.
8. The practical work of an alchemist begins with practices, mental in nature, which change the field of attention (from without to within). The practice does not consist in vain repetitions of verbal formulas. Notice

that we are careful to say “vain repetitions.” In all work of this sort, there must be a good deal of repetition, just as there must be in any kind of practice intended to establish one in some special skill. Use your own words and devise your own formulas.

9. Let part of your practice be a daily and hourly turning of the current of your self-consciousness toward the Central Presence. At first, you will be likely to feel that your mental gaze is fixed on a dark void. Persist, and you will see the Inner Light, and from the Center of that Light will come a Voice. Then you will learn more than can be taught by all the books in the world
10. The practice of the Great Work calls for a third endeavor, in addition to the invocation of spiritual power from the level of superconsciousness, in addition to the daily and hourly turning of the mind inward toward the Center. This third endeavor is summed up in one word -- Love.

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that despitefully use you.”